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MERCER COUNTY

2009
**TEEN
ARTS
FESTIVAL**

A Celebration of the Arts

**LITERARY
ANTHOLOGY**

GREEN PMS 348

YELLOW PMS 3945

A Runyon, Hamilton West

+ 120 screen emulsion down

5 1/2 X 8 1/2 no bleed

This Literary Anthology is the result of the hard work and dedication of the following creative writing students:

Emily Bihl, *Robbinsville High School*

Amy Campbell, *Lawrenceville High School*

Georgia Fremon, *Princeton Friends School*

Veronica Furman, *Hightstown High School*

Stephanie Hendricks, *Lawrenceville High School*

Ann Hopkins, *Lawrenceville High School*

Orianna Ott, *Lawrenceville High School*

Ashley Petix, *Robbinsville High School*

Christine Potts, *Lawrenceville High School*

Samantha Rivera, *Lawrenceville High School*

Rebecca Sprang, *Robbinsville High School*

Samantha Wycoff, *Lawrenceville High School*



Cover design by **Amy Runyon**, Hamilton High School West, Grade 11, Age 17.
Michael Gumpert, 2009 Teen Arts Festival Coordinator.



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Creative Writing
Anthology

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The daily struggle
 To keep fighting the glaring
 Curious burning eyes looking our way is almost
 Too much to stand. I do it for the family,
 I do it so that we can eat
 Maybe twice a week
 I do it for life,
 Because I’m not
 Going to give up
 On my mother or my little sister
 We will keep fighting
 To try and live like
 Everyone else in this world

Cover design by Amy Runyon, Hamilton High School West

Under New York Experience

Georgia Fremom

The roar of the train
 Zooming by under New York City echoes through
 The long, never-ending tubes
 Pitch black as death on a winter's night,
 The tunnel arches as if tired of holding
 Up the structure that's been there for many years
 In the unwelcoming and uninviting roar
 People in business suits wait for
 The train to come. Others stand with
 Their children in their arms
 They pass me by,
 Not noticing the empty
 Can in front of me, with
 PLEASE HELP! scrawled
 On the hollow can. I watch their reactions
 When they turn to look at me in dirty ragged
 Clothes, the only ones I have

I watch a jewelried woman and
 Her small girl with two pink ribboned
 Pony tails
 In their matching fur coats
 They strut
 Past me, giving me merely a second's scowl
 But not one more glance in my direction

Every day is a struggle
 My little sister and my mother
 Only have one rickety shopping
 Cart, with our one filthy garbage bag
 Of possessions. The cart has been with
 The three of us since I can remember,
 Through thunder storms, blizzards and cold
 Weather It is our only possession that keeps
 Us company besides each other

Glass Eyes

Orianna Ott

Glass eyes
 With painted lashes
 Like Twiggy
 The fashion catches
 The curse of the century
 Beauties must starve
 Pare ourselves to perfection
 Scrape and carve
 The new beauty
 Of artificiality
 Our gender is
 Defiant neutrality
 Vague curves
 The corners are bone
 Edgy is good
 Tone and hone
 Sharpen the edges
 Clean the lines
 Minimalist wonder
 Its para-dies

Joyce saw
 The pretty dolls
 The rows of flesh
 Parade down halls
 Like those old streets
 Now on the stand
 The chiseled mouth
 The flawless hand
 The darkness hides
 Nightwalkers' flaws

And models' weights
 Are decreed by laws
 We take a picture
 The image graven
 These dolls need no hope
 Porcelain, no haven
 I wanted to be free
 I rejected that name
 Don't call me doll
 I'm not the same

Don't make me an idol
 With scented skin
 Don't make me a doll
 I won't let you in
 Models won't last
 And ##### will age
 Time doesn't care
 For human rage
 Mannequins lean
 Against the wall
 No kin to man
 Alone they fall
 Empty eyed
 Bodies consumed
 Drugs replace
 The souls exhumed
 A stopper for hunger
 Is easy to buy
 Drugs leave empty
 Another glass eye

Fix

Emily Bihl

The name on the envelope is “Demi”
 I rip it open to reveal \$60 in cash
 It’s the perfect name, really. I am nothing if not pseudo, almost, not-quite. I am Miss Halfway, Miss Maybe, the very aptly named, Demi. Everyone knows that.
 What almost no one knows is that it is short for “Demise.” Which I am also—well, not responsible for the demise of others, but mostly myself. I am sort of a captive of my own demise. Of my own very-nearly-successes, but ultimately downfalls. What’s in a name, indeed.
 I pluck out the three ragged twenties and glide over to the second largest amp on the stage—Judas. He is aptly named, too: he is a follower, but sometimes he is prone to betray us at the most important moments—i.e. right before we are about to go on. This just happens to be the case right this instant, as Chris is futilely plugging and unplugging patch cords in an attempt to win Judas’ approval. I cast Chris a pitying look and then yank the back off of the old thing, carefully taping two of the twenties inside. Chris swears he can hear a tone difference whenever I do this, but he’s crazy. He doesn’t know that I have at least \$200 taped inside the Marshall.
 And then, in a flurry of bruises and curse words, Stephen bursts through the door. Chris and I exchange a glance or mock-surprise and continue our work. Stephen is having none of that, though.
 “Do you know,” he sputters, incredulously, “what I have just been through to get here?” There’s nothing for it but to answer. He’s wild whenever he gets on a rant.
 “No, Stephen, but I have a feeling you’re going to tell us.” I sigh and roll my eyes.
 “Well you’re damn bloody right I’m going to tell you. So I left at five just like you ordered (that is, advised) me to...” Stephen begins the spiel. I try to pay attention at first, but eventually surrender to the comforting buzz of Judas going in and out of operation. At moments like this, with Stephen triumphantly bleeding from the lip and spouting off expletives, it’s hard to believe he ever belonged to me. It’s hard to believe that anything, any relationship, any girl could even contain him. Least of all, a very-nearly-person like myself.
 It was two years ago, in December. I had literally stumbled in off the street at the advice of Marlo, a girl with a pouty face and \$600 suede boots that were never intended to weather, well, weather. The second the snow began to accumulate on the sidewalk, she jumped ship. It seemed that our grand money-saving scheme of walking the twelve blocks back to NYU was futile—instead, we buckled and

Her sides are rough where hands of friends should have tickled her with cries of joy
 Her chest has a hole in it where a soul full of emotion, good like love and all its pillows
 or bad like anger and its thorns should have filled
 up that hole
 These emotions would have plugged up this hole with experiences of dressing rooms,
 hotels, pictures and all those moments that a camera could never take,
 even the
 sad times
 But she is pale, weak, fragile in the wrong places and rough, smooth and strong
 are all in
 the wrong places
 You may ask what is wrong with this girl, who is nameless where a caring family, friends
 and the rest of the world should have called and drilled into a cob-webbed corner
 of her subconscious
 Yes, she is so sick she does not even have a name to her body
 She is dying, possibly suffering to the point of torture in the areas nobody would fathom
 existed
 She is not in a hospital though
 Why?
 It is because of her condition, so easy to treat I laugh
 She is dying of malnourishment
 Malnourishment of affection
 So easy to treat, so why don't you treat her and her thousands of companions
 I do not know part of that answer, only you can answer that
 Maybe you just do not see her
 Physically and all the colors that color it in-between
 So open up your eyes
 Do you see her now?

The Epidemic

Samantha Rivera

Her cheeks are pale where fingerprints should be
 Where foundation from makeup that nobody but a good friend could see
 Her lips are chapped and thin where kisses and the touch of an angel's wing
 should have
 been placed upon
 Her eyes bear no color where other eyes should have taken her away in a sea of
 her
 biggest six-year dreams of cotton candy and roller coasters
 Her shoulders are weak where mothers and family should have held them to get
 by the
 sideways way of life
 Her body is colorless where a lover's hands should have taken her down so deep
 she flew
 to heaven and back again
 Her back is spineless where a husband should have carried her over the threshold
 and
 onto her own stallion, that stallion she asked for as a little girl
 He'll ride with her on that stallion and take her over so much more than the
 threshold of
 the door, hand in hand
 Her throat is sore where answers should have made them healthy
 Her fingernails are bitten and white where a giggly girl's tan hands
 should have painted them a cheap burnt red at three AM
 Her hands are smooth where other hands should have led her blindfolded to a
 world
 named after her and its civilization is based upon her dreams
 Her legs are strong where destinations to be walked should have loosened and
 weakened
 them
 Her forehead is thin where worries and thoughts should have added layers and
 lines to it
 Her hair is thin and colorless where a sister, best friend, or even overly friendly
 classmate
 bored in Biology should have braided it her toes and feet are limp
 where a fight
 should have them down
 And then back up again to walk and make up with food sweetened by laughs

headed for the nearest open door, a hovel bar on the Bowery. We ended up paying
 \$8 just to stand still.

The band sucked, really. They were called Marxo Polo for that night, and that
 night only. But I was young and (as I will remind myself a thousand times over the
 next two years) stupid, and Stephen was so big. He took up the whole stage with
 his presence, snarling and “sorry”-ing the words even when the drummer broke a
 stick and the bassline dragged. I couldn’t take my eyes off him, or even remember
 how to operate my hands when he asked me for a cigarette between sets. I stayed
 through both—he was unstoppable. Insatiable. Stephen kept right on, and he was-
 n’t an egomaniac, or an applause addict: he was simply playing these ##### clubs
 night after night, week after week with increasingly mediocre backup, because he
 didn’t know how not to. It was in his blood.

This, I had to remind myself, was the blood that was now dripping from his
 lower lip, dribbling down unshaven chin and onto un-ironed, fully-ironic Nehi tee
 shirt. Dream, dead. Back to reality.

“...and so I shoved him into the Deli door (which very nearly broke, I might
 add) and ran like #####. Er, hence the, er, blood.” Stephen retrieves a striped ker-
 chief from his low back pocket, finally noticing his wound...or perhaps just for
 dramatic effect. With that, he leaps to the stage and begins unwrapping his guitar
 from a makeshift case of a suitcase and bubble-wrap, bloody kerchief tied around
 the fretboard.

“Eh, Demi, angel, almost forgot. Anything for me, love?” He glances my way,
 tearing his eyes from the guitar. Even though I’ve heard him call just about every-
 one on the planet (including inanimate objects, on particularly drunk occasions)
 “love,” it still gives me a shiver when he directs it to me. Even though we’re long
 broken up. Even though there may never have been any love. Even though I’m
 just the girl in his band, just the girl with the connections.

I reach into my pocket and toss him a tiny translucent bag. It shimmers as it
 arcs, the stage-lights catching it in midair. Poetic, almost. Stephen catches it, ex-
 hales a sigh of relief, and lays down another crumpled twenty on the amp next to
 him in a grand gesture.

Alright, so maybe I am responsible for some demise, after all.

Have We Met?

Ashley Petix

A blink
I know you
I saw you so long ago-
A land of black silhouetted trees and faceless feelings,
Lullabies crooning through an innocent dream

I know you
I've seen you in the dark-
Backdrop of angel's wings-

Clouds rolling in on the sun-streaked horizon-
A land of intrigue-and I knew you
Deep clear water-no taint-
My soul wandered
Long waving grass-winding stairs-wrought iron-
Autumn leaves, lilies petal soft-
-ly Brushing my hands-
Strands of songs brushing, twining like web silk-
Beautiful
The rhythm of your name,
So familiar-
Though I'm sure I've never spoken it before
And now here, staring into your dark eyes-
Of lilies, wrought iron, and those burning autumn leaves
Singeing me
Scorching me
A flutter of breath from my astonished mouth-
I freeze
Forget my lip gloss, my perfect hair-
My sense of propriety-
Fling myself into the rain-
And at you-
And your friends laugh, because we've just met
But I can taste that last cup of tea-
Recall our faded laughter-
Feel that ancient breeze through the leaves, my hair,
Through that black silhouetted tree slightly crooked
On the horizon
Of the life I never lived,
And neither did you-

Seasons

Amy Campbell

A whirlwind of colors,
Engulfing all around,
The commencement of a new,
As her leaves fall to the ground

Her changes oh so brilliant,
Only for a while,
Is dying all that beautiful?
Does it bring about a smile?
When her branches are so bare,
And no life is there in sight,
As darkness begins to fall,
Will each day turn into night?

As the snow begins to pile,
While the air so crisp and clean
The clouds start to break away,
And yet there is a gleam!

Slowly over time,
Her green begins to show,
She is reborn again!
But will die again we know

place. A place where I would never flourish, and all of the ground was sinking sand.

Nope, they never found me.

They didn't find me because they weren't looking.

I came back, with a feeling of guilt that I wanted to do everything to stifle.

I wasn't looking either. We never saw each other clearly.

I realize that now.

In my head, they were angular images with thick outlines, a label I had put them into. Parents just don't understand.

No! That's not them.

There's light being shed, a bright light I see off in the distance. With this light I see them clearly.

Their images are soft, their intentions pure. Their execution poor, but their intentions pure.

The light is brighter now, and more vast than a moment ago. I see with new eyes in this light.

I see myself differently. I am the angular image with thick outlines. I label myself.

The light is closer now, the anticipation burns like the illumination does my eyes.

I never said goodbye! They're forgotten, names and a number crumpled in the back of the junk drawer. Gathering dust, it sits there, waiting for me to remember.

Why was I such a fool? Why couldn't I see this before? They loved me, they really did! And this is how I repay them? Parents, forever abandoned by their daughter.

I want them to mourn. But they can't mourn if they've forgotten me.

It's overwhelming now, bright and sterile and coming closer by the millisecond.

Please! Not so soon! I want to undo what's been undone!

But what's done is done.

It's all around. I can't get out. There's no more darkness now. I fear the light.

Electricity.

Sound waves cut through the air like a knife does the tension. My vision grows focused, stronger, and opens up.

I'm back.

And I'm saying hello.

But we remember
You forget your friends,
Your polo, your status-

And grab me back,
Breathing into my ear-
'I walked with you once upon a dream'
The music fails
The clothing fails
Words fail

All pales,
Compared to that night-
That one night-
Land of black silhouetted trees careful nonchalance-silver strings-
Of the life I never lived-

And you didn't either-
Chasm of possible and impossible-
The life we have no claim to-
I'm ready to believe

Letters Never Written

Rebecca Sprang

I would have liked to see you once more before you died. Not because my 11 year old mind has a morbid curiosity to see sick and dying people deteriorating in washed-out hospital rooms. No, it's more because I never got the choice. I can barely remember what you look like, and I have no idea what you sound like. Isn't it sad that I can barely recollect my own grandfather?

I suppose the reason why they didn't let me see you is because I would have too many questions that had no answers, or were wholly inappropriate to anyone above my age. Like, why were you there, was it because you smoked cigars, or because you were, excuse my blunt language, fat? Were you in pain those last couple months? Did you miss us? Did you cry? My father cried you know. That's how I knew you were dead because I had never seen him cry before.

This is the letter I would have sent to you, if I knew how to put my thoughts

and ideas into words that actually made sense together. Even though I could barely string coherent sentences together, I do remember sending you a card. It had drawings of cars that looked like hats with wheels and drawings of mice cheese on it. It wouldn't fit in the envelope because I had taped all my loose change on the card where all the circles were. It was all the money I had; I sent it because I thought it would help out. Now I know that it wasn't the petty change that would help you out.

If I ever had the chance to ask you one more thing, I would ask you, "Did that card make you happy?"

Bridget

On Sunday, Denise called me and told me you were dead. That you died in an accident, your motorcycle had collided with the side of an 18 wheeler. They're having a closed funeral, your family that is. I won't get to see Matt or Christian when they're telling stories about you and trying not to cry. I won't get to see your face again, although considering the nature of the accident, I doubt even if I went I would get to see your face. In a way I'd love to be there, because it would have rectified missing karate on Friday, the last day anyone saw you alive, but I'm thankful that I'm not going. See I always have pictured you in motion in my head, always moving, always laughing. Not seeing you move is just going to go way over my head.

Friday has been eating me alive since I got that call on Sunday. I left early, didn't stay for the adult class. I left before you left. If I ever had the chance to go back in time, I would go back to that day and I would remove this twisting guilt inside of me. I've always wondered, if I had stayed, if I hadn't left to go off to some Girl Scout thing that was that night... I wonder, would you still be here?

It eats me to this day.

Bridget

This letter is to the Zoobini's, but just the pretty ones with springs for feet and rollerblades. None of the other ones. This letter is also to Nancy Drew, who is perpetually solving unsolved mysteries inside your computer. This is to Yuna, and "Sandy" as we named him, who ran around being awesome and good looking. This is to Pikachu, Samus, Link, and Kirby, who I owe many hours of amusement to.

This letter is to the chicken fingers, ice cream, lemonade and weird flavors of orange juice, like banana pineapple orange juice, inside your mother's refrigerator. It is to the teriyaki chicken that you convinced me into loving. It is to all the vegetables I didn't have to eat, as long as I ate over your house.

paper's own blood. It didn't stop me from feeling the rip straight through my chest.

You had no idea what I'd done with your valentine.

Two halves of paper mean everything and nothing.

I remember holding the strip of jagged-edged tape between my fingers, feeling the adhesive clinging to my shin. Carefully, so carefully, I pulled the tape off my fingertips. Carefully, so carefully, I made sure the edges of the heart matched up. Gently, so gently, I applied the tape that would hold the ragged edges of the ripped-apart valentine together.

I remember sitting and looking at what I had done. The piece of tape shone in the desk light, bright against the dull construction paper. Above the cuts that were the poem, the tape was a shiny new scar. The pink paper, though, stood out against the brown wood grain of the writing desk. The edges were uneven where the tape pieced them together. The sides of the heart that gave it its shape didn't match up, either. It didn't bother me though. I took my first valentine and walked outside.

I remember holding a piece of taped paper in my hands and holding it high over my head. The sun was directly behind the valentine, giving the heart the brilliant corona of the sun for a new halo. The tape no longer shone, because the light was no longer directly on it. I stretched my arms to hold the heart as high as I could. It folded slightly, like a book, before I snapped it open, bearing it to the sun. My arms were taunted and strong as I held my heart aloft in the cold air, ignoring the way the winter air tried to nip at my fingertips. The heart beneath my skin pulsed warmly, giving me all the vitality I needed.

You gave me my heart, but my heart wasn't yours.

My heart will not fall apart so long as I hold it together.

Stream of Unconsciousness

Christine Potts

Impact.

Sound waves cut through the air like the windshield now does. My vision grows unfocused, weaker, and closes in. It's dark.

As a child, I was never afraid of the dark, but now I'm learning to fear it. The darkness I was used to was that of the linen closet and under my bed in a game of hide and seek.

Or perhaps I would hide behind a bush in the very back of our property. No one would think to look there, and no one ever did.

Not even when I ran away from home. I ran away to get myself out of that

Last Valentine's Day

Ann Hopkins

Last Valentine's Day, I got my first valentine.

I remember holding the piece of pink construction paper in my hands, and the tips of my fingers ran over the fibrous surface. After tracing the outline of the heart, my eyes turned up to look into yours. A "thank you" sprang to my lips, and I saw you smile. God, I loved the way you smiled, your face splitting apart in this big goofy grin that was all teeth and crinkled-up eyes. You had the most wonderful smile in your eyes that anybody could ever set their eyes on. You accepted my thanks and walked away.

I remember sitting in my chair and holding the rough-cut heart in my hands. I could see where your hand slipped with the scissors, and I chuckled to myself as the vision of you sprang into my mind's eye. I remember reading my name, in your attempt at tidy script, scrawled in red marker, and a short and cheesy poem underneath.

I remember holding the most important paper in my hands at that very moment, because more than anything, I remember the way my heart began to flutter, how I imagined that I might be somebody important to you. For I had never been acknowledged in that way before that moment. There are no words to effectively explain the sudden pull I felt for you, the devotion you earned by singling me out. I was the only girl who received a hand-cut valentine from you that day, and that made me significant. I had never quite felt that way before. You did that for me. You deserved so many thanks and praises. You were the absolute most precious person in the world. You gave me my very first valentine.

You gave another girl a diamond ring.

It was silly to imagine a valentine meant anything at all.

I remember holding the piece of construction paper in my hands, thinking. It was stupid to think I was anything or anybody special, especially to you. You meant the world to me and I meant so much less to you. My bed was soft and cushioned beneath me, and the rough-cut heart was outlined by the light of my bedside lamp. It had a ghastly manmade halo about it.

I remember sitting up on my bed and holding the rough-cut heart in my hands. The corny poem dug the sharp edges of its letters into the paper, and the paper was bleeding the poetry. That was red blood it was written in, after all. I fingered the edge, and as my fingertip trailed over the crease in the heart, I gave a sharp jerk that tore the paper heart in half.

I remember holding two halves of a pink construction paper valentine in my hands. The edges of the paper were jagged where I'd ripped it, for the cut was uneven. Little pink hairs stuck out from the sides of the paper. They were such ordinary, dull pieces of pink paper. It didn't change the poem from being written in the

It is to your awesome pentagon shaped bedroom, your hammock of beanie babies, the weird collection of china dolls that I'm pretty sure you didn't like but kept anyway. It's to the baskets on the stairs keeping books, sewing supplies and money. It is to the bath and body works soap dispenser in your downstairs powder room; pretty sure it was melon and I know it had those blue little 'exfoliation' balls in them. It is to your swing set, chalk, hula skirts and hula hoops. It is to your ski skewer thingys and your dad's bicycle with the really thin tires. It is even to the really scary looking horse in your basement.

But this letter is definitely not to you.

Bridget

Just kidding.

Did you really think I could write letters without writing one to you? Really, you amuse me sometimes. Now, since these letters are baggage in the form of language, you must be like, "WTF, mate? What did I do?" The more appropriate question is what didn't you do? How didn't you screw me up? But look at me, getting all ahead of myself. Let me explain.

I get feelings. I get emotions. I understand them a lot more than other people do. I do NOT understand people. Attempting to figure out the logic behind other people's calculations just goes way over my head, and I think it always will to some degree. But now that I've figured out my problem, I'm starting to find a major flaw in the logic you had. You were my best friend, you knew me better than anyone else, why wouldn't you be able to see that I just never was really able to understand people and why they did things? Why wouldn't you want to help me understand that the way I acted towards all people, including you, was holding me back from ever really bonding with them? Why did you leave me in the dirt when I didn't know enough to know I was broken and needed fixing. Why didn't you care?

Oh and believe me, it's not that I don't like you anymore, far from it. I just have this nasty unshakeable feeling, that under that bubbly façade, there's something not so pretty there. I so wish I was wrong, but when I watch you leach on to people for complements then turn your back on them like a fickle little schoolgirl, little else comes to mind.

Also, you need to know, it's been four years. I'm over it. You, and what you did, barely even cross my mind anymore. So don't take this essay and add it to a shrine to complete your sick narcissism you have infecting you right now. All this is, is a footnote, an afterword. I figured after five years of friendship and four years

of forcing the impression upon me that I so royally screwed up, you should see what you should have always seen. You failed just as much at being a friend as I did, and you don't have a grasp on the magnitude of what you have done to me.

I hope you're happy now.

Bridget

I swear you pick the worst times to hit me with stupid things. This irritating disregard for when things would be appropriate has been a recent development and I believe that it really only exists so you can see me stuck between what my heart believes and what my mind knows is right. Can you not plead your undying love for me when you clearly know that I know you don't really know what love is anymore? Confused? I sure am. I've been jerked around until I was worse than a toy; I was your own personal entertainment system. Do you really think that being with you would be good for my mental and physical health? Please. I don't need you around anymore, you ##### psychopathic train-wreck.

This doesn't mean that I don't care about you, #####. I just don't need you in a position that you can mess with my mind and no one, including me, has a check on you. Seriously, I still care about you. Actually, I still might love you, even after all this #####, but really, how much did you think you could put me through before I would crack? If I ever had the chance to take you back, I wouldn't. I know better than to put my self through that again.

I hope you can find what you're searching for in life.

Love,

Bridget

Has anyone told you yet that no one cares? No one cares about you, in fact if you didn't whine so loud and attach yourself to people I care about, I wouldn't know you exist. It's a pity, because before you became a jealous stuck up bitch, who hated my guts for petty reasons, I actually could tolerate you. I would go so far to say that maybe, I liked you. Maybe. Unfortunately, you had to pick the wrong person to abhor. I'm unwavering, solid. You could have trusted me. You could have trusted me more than you could have ever trusted yourself. If I ever had the chance to let you back in, take you back under my wing, I would just so you could see how immature you've been through this whole process. You could have seen that I've been nothing but a friend and I'm not causing the problems. I'd love to show you my world, the world through my eyes, so you can see how insignificant you really are. But after the mess you've made, and the drama you've dealt out, I want nothing to do with your sorry little#####.

Just though you ought to know.

Bridget

I told her about my little trip to the warehouse and the documents that I found. They turned out to belong to a ring of German spies that Inga had once belonged to but who had kicked her out after the leaders had discovered some questionable photographs of her involving striped lederhosen. The goal of this ring was insidious- their plan was to distribute swastika armbands and establish Nazi groups within our own borders, relying on the isolationist tendencies of Americans from years past to disguise them.

In an outburst of protest, the woman before me challenged my theory. Why would she ever have come to me, she asked, if I had only been a spy? And what of her underwire? That, I replied, had only been a plot device. She knew my level of professionalism and the steps that I would take to round up more than just the usual suspects. She knew that eventually I would find the whereabouts of the ring. She had intended from the beginning to steal their blueprints and carry out the whole evil plot herself out of anger at her former superiors. As for the underwire of her brassiere- she had thrown that out in an act of defiance against the United States government.

Cornered, Inga tried a new tack. She tried to convince me that she had only been a double agent and had intended all along on exposing them so that she could be free of their clutches and run away with a certain dashing rogue detective. In a moment of weakness, I let my guard down. That was when she pulled out a .38 and shot me. As I fell to the ground, the world around me darkened and I heard the rapid click of heels on pavement as Inga Von Kommen made her escape.

Three weeks later, I sat at my desk again. I had five slugs in me- four bourbon, one lead. The doctors hadn't been able to remove the bullet due to the fact that it was dangerously close to an artery. I just laughed it off and called it my own war wound. But the real war wound was a completely different one- my broken heart. The letter came a few days later. Police had arrested a young woman that they had later identified as one Inga Von Kommen, German spy, after she had thrown a fit in a public area when asked if she would like to join the cause and donate the underwire of her brassiere.

I didn't read any further. I only poured myself another glass, deciding that the entire incident was further proof that men like me have lousy love lives. But I can live with that. The life of an individualistic private eye was never meant to be understood.

I'd have no rest until the culprit was found.

I won't lead you down the sordid path I took to find the truth. It is full of walks down shady streets and turns into dark alleyways full of sinister characters. Suffice it to say that I received a tip that led me to a seemingly abandoned warehouse. The walls were vandalized with the words "frankfurter" and "sauerkraut," a blatant attempt to undermine American patriotism and promote fascist ideals. There were burlap sacks full of armbands with swastikas on them. I was appalled, but at the time could not even begin to imagine the evil plot in its entirety.

Then I found a stack of papers that to this day I wish I had never laid eyes on. They were in a simple manila folder that I would have overlooked had there not been a single platinum blonde hair stuck in the flap. Inside were telegrams in German and a photograph of Nancy. At first I thought that surely my case had taken a turn for the worst- that these culprits were following her. But after taking a closer look I saw that the picture of Nancy wasn't simply a picture- it was a passport. A German passport that displayed a different name: Inga. My frantic heart tried to deny what was right in front of me. I had been so blinded that I hadn't take note of the signs. The cigar should have been my first tip-off. Any woman who can smoke like that is strong enough to smother a potential enemy with a Salisbury steak.

The next night I went to meet up with my client. She was anxious to hear about my progress, and we had agreed on dinner at a little restaurant called Richard's. I came exactly one minute late, and she was quick to tell me that. I was about to ask her what she wanted to drink when the waiter came over with a beer and placed it in front of her. She smiled sweetly at me and urged me to tell her about my findings. I found myself stalling for a few moments when suddenly, a fly that had been buzzing around landed in her glass. She looked at it with tight lips, then took a spoon, fished the insect out, then pushed both the spoon and the glass aside calmly. All doubt was erased from my mind as the clues all fell together. The choice of drink, coupled with the anal-retentive sense of cleanliness and punctuality only added up to the description of a cold, calculating member of the Nazi party.

She must have seen the look in my eyes because she excused herself. But I knew better. By the time she'd made it out the back way and into the alley it led to, I was already there. I asked her, with no small note of bitterness in my voice, if I was such bad company that she had to skip out on dinner. Then I called her by her real name- Inga Von Kommen. I saw fear in her blue eyes as she tried to convince me that she had no idea what I was talking about. Still, she tried to edge her way around me, and we ended up circling each other, both of us taking care not to turn our backs for even in an instant.

Bitter Dreams (Wake up)

Samantha Wycoff

Restless,
Tossing,
Thinking,
Yearning,
I lay awake,
Dreaming of you,
Your sweet cruelty,
Overwhelming
Your sweet words,
Will choke me
Drowsy,
Still,
Thinking,
Yearning,
You are long gone,
But I bite my tongue,
And swallow the venom,
That is bubbling up,
From my heart and voice,
As a last resort,
To save you from pain
So I absorb yours as well

Waiting
No longer yearning
Waiting,
For you to wake up,
So I can sleep again

I Was I am

Stephanie Hendricks

I was the first person on Earth
 God Himself swallowed a tub of dust and out came me
 I became a part of the stars, glowing in the darkness
 I was the morning whose light shined so bright
 I was a part of Earth's crust, mantle and core
 Through the art of sensation I birthed the inner core which shined brighter than
 the sun
 I was the brown, cracked ground underneath Cairo, Egypt
 I created dance, I created flow

I became one of the first slaves
 I became one of the first slave owners
 Millions were captured and I was one of the millions who were sold
 I became the inventor of electricity and the inventor of the traffic light
 I move under the radar of SS Orbit and I walk not having to move my feet
 I carry a rocket on my heels
 I float like an inflatable tube

I created words
 I created ocean and breeze

I was the flight of a bird
 I was the leaf that fell from trees
 I was the fall of winter; I was winter's eve of fall
 I was the upbringing of spring
 I was the decline of summer

I am the harmony of Rhythm and Blues
 I am the history of man
 I am the chip on your shoulder; I am the monkey on your back
 I am the star of day and the sun of night
 I am the butterfly flowing through the trees
 And I am the lethal stings of a hive of honeybees
 I am the elements Earth, Air, Fire and Water
 I am the Grand Clock that holds the past, present and future
 I am the roaring of the ocean and I am the muscles of man
 I am the Sagittarian who shoots the arrow of life
 I am nature's light and not only am I today, but I am also tomorrow...
 Who are you?

This Gun For Underwire

Veronica Furman

Author's note: Film noir is a genre that developed during the World War II era and remained popular until the late fifties. It typically featured a caustic, lone wolf detective who masked his sense of idealism with cynicism. This type of protagonist was originated by Humphrey Bogart as the character of Sam Spade in The Maltese Falcon in 1941. The protagonist was often tempted by a femme fatale type of character who usually ended up being a villain. Film noir was full of dark characters, double-crossings and murder. The following article is written as a column by the private eye in a film noir movie. The title is a play on This Gun For Hire, another film noir that starred Alan Ladd.

—Veronica Furman

This Gun For Underwire

by Hal Hart

Private Eye

It was a Tuesday, and I was lounging at my desk. A cold breeze fluttered through a broken window in the room. The wind outside howled in an ominous, foreboding tone.

I had heard the click of her heels on the corridor floor all the way from my office. I remember a feeling of immediate and inexplicable dread. After all, any woman who could walk in stilettos on wet, freshly polished hardwood reeked of danger. As soon as she stepped through the doorway, I knew I was in trouble. She filled the room with the scent of lilacs. A few platinum locks tumbled from her bun and although her face was veiled, I could distinguish a pair of startled blue eyes. She wore black, as if in mourning.

I told her to take a seat. Tentatively, she complied. I came around and seated myself at the front of my desk and lit a cigar. She told me her name was Nancy, and she hadn't known where else to go. I answered that a private detective was a pretty good person to go to for that sort of problem.

Someone had stolen the underwire from her brassiere, she told me with moist eyes. I offered her a handkerchief, but she took my cigar instead. How could she fulfill her patriotic duty, she asked me between puffs, when she couldn't donate useful parts of her undergarments to the military for the construction of weapons? She had been robbed not only of upper support, so to speak, but also of her role as a woman in the current American industry and home front. She looked at me with those blue eyes and pleaded for my help. I was her last hope. Being a man of few words, and not very well versed in words of sympathy I simply told her that I'd look into it. But those blue eyes of hers had already snatched my heart, and I knew